

## SCOTT SCORES FIRST AS ...

# Brave Blues battle on

FOR 40 glorious minutes on Saturday Wycombe Wanderers seemed set to shock the mighty Blyth Spartans into submission and so reach the third round of the FA Trophy for the first time.

But just when it looked as though Wycombe would hang on to a lead given to them by Terry Scott in the 31st minute, Blyth showed their fighting qualities to equalise and so take this already marathon tie to a replay.

After two postponements, which cost the clubs heavily, the last thing they wanted was a draw but brave Blues at least now have the satisfaction of taking on these famous north-easterners at Loakes Park.

The pitch which had thawed out surprisingly to produce a dead but safe surface, was still bumpy in places, allowing neither side to gain a steady rhythm.

Instead, the 2,000 crowd witnessed a bruising cup-tie full of commitment, in which Wycombe showed they were capable of looking after themselves.

### Fair result

A draw was the fair result in the end, and the band of 200 loyal supporters who made the 600 mile round trip by train, could feel well-satisfied with the result, even though for a long

### Blyth Spartans 1, Wycombe 1

#### MICHAEL KNOX reports

time it appeared their side would win.

Manager Andy Williams included one slight surprise in his line-up. He brought in Stewart Atkins for his first game since Boxing Day and he looked as though he had regained some of his former sharpness before naturally running out of steam in the closing stages.

Both sides took a while to find their feet, and one man experiencing particular difficulty with the conditions was Alan Phillips, who produced a series of mis-kicks in the first half. Luckily for him, none of them proved costly.

### Gift goal

Blyth looked very edgy and half-hearted, thinking they could beat these 'soft southerners' without trying. They soon paid the penalty for that apparent over-confidence when Wycombe took the lead in the 31st minute.

It was something of a gift goal as Blyth full-back John Waterson mis-kicked his clearance so badly that Scott suddenly found himself with the ball at his feet and the net only five yards away. He did what was

necessary to the delight of the visiting fans.

With John Priestley working hard in mid-field and Atkins finding plenty of room on the right where he was up against Ron Guthrie, Wycombe continued to dictate matters until half-time.

Steve Hardwick, another Wycombe hero, forced home keeper Dave Clarke to stretch and tip a shot over the bar. But immediately afterwards Hardwick spoiled his display by deservedly being booked for a bad tackle on Steve Carney.

Temperatures were getting a little frayed at this stage and there was an ugly incident after John Maskell had dived to recover a ball that he had dropped. Micky Wall appeared to kick Maskell in the face and was booked for his pains. It was while Maskell was happily recovering that a bottle was thrown on to the field by a foolish spectator.

Just before the break Blyth, stronger in the tackle, were gaining the upper hand and Terry Johnson fired only just over the top with a neat shot on the turn.

Although dominating the game territorially in the second half, Blyth had precious few

scoring chances and it was Wycombe who could easily have increased their advantage. Mark Judd's flick after a pin-point cross by Holfield, was blocked by Clarke, who did well to get his fingertips to a close-range effort by Scott.

But the Wycombe defence's only slip of the game was punished in the 71st minute. Alan Walker was given acres of space in which to head home from the edge of the area, following a cross from the right. Maskell got his hands to the ball but could not stop it crossing the line.

It was all Blyth now and Peter Davies went desperately close a minute later, but his left-foot shot from five yards drifted wide.

In the end Wycombe were the more relieved when the final whistle went, but they will not have an easy task at Loakes Park. But at least Wycombe need not fear the mighty Spartans, who are certainly not the team they were in last year's epic cup run.

**BLYTH:** D. Clarke; J. Waterson, R. Guthrie, A. Walker, K. Houghton, T. Dixon, P. Davies, M. Wall (sub: D. Varty 62 mins), T. Johnson, S. Carney, M. Dagless.

**WYCOMBE:** J. Maskell; S. Hardwick, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, J. Priestley, S. Atkins (sub: D. Evans 72 mins), M. Holfield, M. Judd, H. Kennedy, T. Scott.

**Referee:** J. Maxson (Ashton-under-Lyne).

**Half-time:** 0-1. **Scorers:** Blyth — Walker (71 mins); Wycombe — Scott (31).